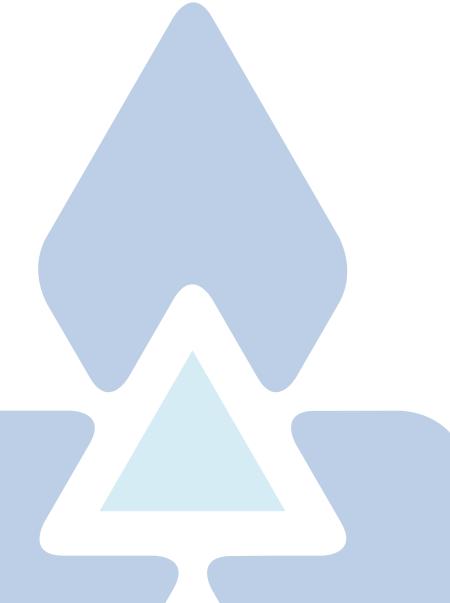Research Paper   **55**

What Enables or Disables Leadership for Transformational Change in Africa?

Suda Perera, E. Houston Shearon, Paul Jackson and Heather Lyne de Ver
May 2018

DLP

DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) is an international research initiative based at the University of Birmingham, and working in partnership with La Trobe University in Melbourne.

DLP aims to increase understanding of the political processes that drive or constrain development. Its work focuses on the crucial role of home-grown leaderships and coalitions in forging legitimate institutions that promote developmental outcomes.

DLP's independent program of research is supported by the Australian aid program.

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"Uongozi" means leadership in Kiswahili, and inspiring and strengthening leadership is the core purpose of our organisation. Based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, UONGOZI Institute is dedicated to supporting African leaders to attain sustainable development for their nations and for Africa.

We seek to inspire leaders and promote the recognition of the important role of leadership in sustainable development. We believe that:

• Leadership is the key to achieving sustainable development
• The development of a leader requires specialised grooming
• An African model of leadership is vital for achieving the most favourable development outcomes for Africa.

The Institute is an independent government agency established by the Government of Tanzania and supported by the government of Finland.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of DLP, the Australian Government or partner organisations.

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Summary

This paper reviews the findings of a study that hypothesised that leadership had been instrumental to bringing about change in Africa but acknowledged that what constituted leadership, and how leadership had facilitated change, was poorly understood. The stydy was led by the UONGOZI Institute and the Developmental Leadership Program.

It sought to unpack how change had taken place, how fundamental it had been, the role leadership had played and the factors that had both enabled and hindered the achievement of change. The overarching research question was, 'What are the enablers and disablers of leadership for transformational change in Africa?'

We draw together the findings from nine case studies from six countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda. Tentative key findings of the cases were as follows:

- Across Africa, instances of widespread dissatisfaction with the existing rules of the game have created opportunities for transformational change.

- In these instances, a type of leadership has emerged. 'Leadership for transformational change' differs from traditional management or individualistic leadership in that it seeks to fundamentally alter the rules of the game and set out a vision for making change happen.

- Such leadership goes well beyond technical or managerial competence. It involves mobilising collaboration and resources for a common developmental good. True transformation requires leadership to exercise political savvy.

- Understanding leadership therefore involves examining the interests and incentives of the actors driving the change, the coalitions they build to facilitate it and the followers who support it.

- A number of intrinsic and external factors are required, including: a conducive environment; actors who can seize opportunities; leaders with credibility; coalitions of change agents who can work together; and a process that builds on small initial gains to effect wider change.

- Potential disabling factors include drastic changes in the political system; the emergence of a powerful group of spoilers; fragmentation of the leadership process and loss of direction; lack of genuine buy-in; and unintended consequences of the change process.

- Some factors can at particular times be enablers of leadership and at other times become disablers. In the case of LUCHA (*Lutte pour le Changement*) in DRC, the factors that enabled the leadership to build up a mass movement later became obstacles.

- In some cases, change took place as a result of authoritarian leadership styles, while consultative or collaborative leadership processes prevented more widespread change.

- Complete transformation was rare; rather, pockets of transformational change emerged.

We can also say that change can be facilitated and led through different leadership styles. In some ways, this subverts some of the traditional leadership literature by showing that there is no linear relationship between leadership style and the type of change that results. Rather, we show that different leadership styles can lead to significant changes in the rules of the game in specific contexts. Particular leaders were able to transcend the confines of their context. They either changed the rules of the game to allow change to happen or became very good at playing the game to enable change within the confines of the rules.

Although we cannot draw robust conclusions from the nine cases covered, they do show that interesting and important stories of positive leadership and transformational change are taking place across Africa. It is hoped that this paper will serve as starting point for further research into how positive change happens in Africa, and the leadership processes behind such changes.

The cases and researchers

This research draws on nine case studies in six African countries. These were carried out by experienced local researchers selected for their theoretical and empirical insights into change processes in their respective countries and their research networks and access to significant actors. Key informant interviews comprised a significant element of the research methodology, so researchers were asked to propose cases of leadership for transformational change for which they believed they could access the relevant stakeholders to carry out the research.

- The two cases from Ghana, on the establishment of a National Health Insurance Agency (NHIA) and the transformation of the human rights regime, were carried out by Victor Brobbey.

- The two cases from Tanzania, on Maridhiano in Zanzibar and women's representation in the Tanzanian parliament, were carried out by Mohammed Bakari and Alexander Makulilo.

- The two cases from South Africa, on the Saldanha Bay Municipality and the office of the Public Prosecutor, were carried out by Jo-Ansie van Wyk.

- The case from Uganda on the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) was carried out by Frederick Golooba-Mutebi.

- The case from Ethiopia on community policing in Dire Dawa was carried out by Paul Jackson, E. Houston Shearon and Demelash Kassaye: publications.dlprog.org/RP53.pdf

- The case from the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the rise of LUCHA was carried out by Suda Perera, Victor Anas Kambale and Josaphat Musamba Bussy: publications.dlprog.org/RP54.pdf

The local researchers maintain ownership of the case studies. The final reports and findings of cases not available online can therefore be obtained from the researchers responsible for each case, or by contacting DLP at info@dlprog.org.

1
Introduction

This paper reviews the findings of a study led by the UONGOZI Institute and the Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) that examined how leadership processes had brought about change in African contexts. The study hypothesised that leadership had been instrumental to bringing about change in Africa, but acknowledged that what constituted leadership, and how leadership had facilitated change, was poorly understood. Through a series of case studies from across the continent, the study therefore sought to unpack how change had taken place, how fundamental this change had been, the role leadership had played and the factors that had both enabled and hindered the achievement of change.

Twenty-first century scholars of Africa have sought to find a new narrative to understand change in the continent, one that moves away from Cold War understandings and the tone of 'doom and gloom' that characterised Africa's decade of civil conflicts in the 1990s. Prominent among these narratives has been the idea of 'Africa Rising' – a term that features heavily in academic publications, media coverage and international organisation outputs. It describes a vision of Africa as a continent of rapid economic growth that has the potential to sustain long periods of peace, development and democratisation. While the Africa Rising narrative has since been critiqued and proven problematic (Beresford, 2016; Taylor, 2016), it is clear that in several countries across Africa there has been considerable positive developmental change over the past two decades. Africa remains a continent with many problems to be overcome, but these positive changes have been wide and varied, occurring in different countries, at different levels and across a range of sectors. Some have been transformational, meaning they have fundamentally altered the rules of the game in order to bring about a developmental good.

'Transformational change' in this context is defined as *altering the rules of the game* (Leftwich & Hogg, 2007, p. 12) to create a set of legitimated institutions and behaviours in order to bring about a sustainable developmental good. We understand leadership in this context as an evolving political process in pursuit of change (Lyne de Ver, 2009, p. 9). It is distinct from 'management' because the process involves creating and pursuing a new vision for the rules of the game, rather than simply ensuring the effective implementation of existing rules.

By concentrating on leadership as a process, we aimed to move away from studies of leadership that focus on the characteristics of specific individuals to look at a wider network of change agents and the processes by means of which they come together to drive forward change. Following Leftwich's assertion that there is a 'significant gap in the international community's knowledge and understanding of the importance of leadership, elites and coalitions in meeting the many different challenges of development in weak states and emerging economies' (Leftwich, 2009, p. 7), this study sought to examine the relationship between leadership and transformational change in Africa. It did so through a series of empirical case studies from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda that tracked how leadership processes played out in reality. Through these case studies, we showed how leadership could play a critical transformational role – but in different ways and contexts. We also drew conclusions about change in Africa more generally, which itself can be used to support developmental leadership in the continent.

Working in partnership with African researchers with strong local knowledge of change in their countries, the study sought out examples of leaders managing to bring about changes in the rules of the game in their respective fields, beyond merely improving management systems. We found changes were taking place at different levels (local, municipal, regional and national). We also analysed a variety of different sectors: community policing in Ethiopia, the health sector in Ghana, the justice sector in South Africa, women's participation in Tanzania, youth mobilization in the DRC, and the water sector in Uganda.

The overarching research question behind the study was, 'What are the enablers and disablers of leadership for transformational change in Africa?' In order to answer this larger question, we explored six sub-questions:

- What is transformational change?

- Why/how is leadership important for facilitating change and what does 'leadership' mean in the African context?

- How can we study leadership for transformational change in Africa?

- Where leadership has facilitated change, what factors have led to the emergence of this leadership?

- What factors prevent leadership processes from fully realising transformational change?

- What generalisable lessons can we learn about leadership in Africa?

This paper outlines our findings in light of these questions and is divided into five further sections. Section 2 provides a review of the existing literature on transformational change and leadership – focusing in particular on why it is important to understand this in the African context. Section 3 provides a brief justification of the cases we picked out as transformational and outlines the methodology we used. Section 4 examines the factors that enabled the leadership process in these cases, while Section 5 discusses the obstacles that may have prevented change from occurring to its fullest extent. In the final section, we present some of the key findings of the study as well as highlighting areas for further investigation.

2

What is leadership for transformational change?

This study responded to an issue that emerged from the UONGOZI Institute's ongoing work on leadership in Africa. While there was an assumption that good leaders were needed to bring about significant changes in African contexts, there was little empirical evidence to point to what good leadership for change looked like, or indeed what the difference was between simple improvements and truly transformational change. As a result, the UONGOZI Institute teamed up with DLP to conduct some preliminary research into this topic.

Early on, it became clear there was a need to bring some conceptual clarification, to define what was meant by the term 'leadership for transformational change'. While the idea of transformation is present within the existing literature on leadership, it is usually discussed in terms of leadership styles and the characteristics of individual leaders. The concept of 'transformational leadership' has been well established in the field of leadership studies (Burns, 1978), and is often contrasted with 'transactional leadership', although there is disagreement within leadership studies over the extent to which they actually differ. When J. M. Burns explored the concepts in his seminal work, *Leadership*, he saw the two leadership styles as being on opposite ends of a leadership continuum. While transactional leadership involves motivating followers through self-interest, transformational leadership encourages the pursuit of higher-value goals in order to achieve a higher level of performance than simply the efficient realisation of the leader's initial target (Burns, 1978; Nguni et al., 2006).

In contrast, authors such as Bass (1999) see transformational and transactional leadership as two distinct categories. Transactional leadership is based primarily on the realisation of leaders' goals, whereas transformational leadership allows for the pursuit of leaders' goals but also stimulates the development of followers (ibid.). While there is disagreement over exactly how transactional and transformational leadership differ, most understandings in the existing leadership literature (which is located primarily in the fields of business and organisation studies) focus on the nature of the leadership itself when determining whether or not leadership is transformational. Transformational leadership here focuses on how leadership can lead to improved efficiencies, and whether transformations in both leaders and followers facilitate improvements in organisations and the delivery of existing outcomes.

Our study was less concerned with whether or not the leadership style itself had been transformational, and more so with whether the *change* that resulted from the leadership process could be seen as transformational, and in what ways leadership had affected that significant change. As such, we focused not on transformational leadership but rather on *leadership for transformational change*.

Taking the change itself as the starting point, the study then drew on differing case studies to show how change could be facilitated and led by different forms of leadership style. In some ways, this subverts some of the traditional leadership literature, by showing there is no linear relationship between leadership style and the type of change that results. Rather, we showed that different forms of leadership style could lead to significant changes in the rules of the game in specific contexts.

To be categorised as a 'change in the rules of the game' (and therefore to count as an example of transformational change), leaders had to go beyond simply improving the effectiveness of the existing system within their respective field. While appreciating that developmental goods can emerge when strong leaders confine their activities to the efficient implementation of the existing rules of the game, we argued in this study that this constituted good management rather than leadership. Leadership *requires* leaders to understand that the existing rules of the game are preventing the full realisation of a particular developmental good, and that it is necessary to institute a new set of norms and patterns of behaviour. The leader(s) then needs to set out a vision for change, and embark on a process that can facilitate that change. The concept of leadership for transformational change is barely discussed within the literature, and one contribution we made lay in providing a conceptual exploration of the terms and delineating what is meant both by leadership and by transformational change in this context.

In their discussion of leadership within states, Leftwich and Hogg argue that states are reliant upon a set of legitimated institutions and behaviours known as the 'rules of the game', without which 'there can be no state, and certainly no effective state' (Leftwich & Hogg, 2007, p. 12). This echoes the work of thinkers such as Douglas North, who discuss the behaviours

that shape institutions (North, 1991). Leaders are crucial in the establishment of the rules of the game, and gaining legitimacy for these rules from their followers. Leaders are also important in determining how, and whether, they and their followers comply with these rules (Leftwich and Hogg describe this as 'the games within the rules'). Weak or ineffective states are said to be characterised by an 'inconsistency, between rules and behaviour, or by situations in which anti-developmental informal rules overwhelm formal rules' (Leftwich & Hogg, 2007, p. 12).

Our study applied this understanding of the rules of the game, and the influence that leaders had over them, to the sub-state level as well as the state level. Prior to the transformation in each of the case studies, the existing *status quo* was characterised by a failure to adequately address a particular developmental issue. This was either because the existing rules of the game were not designed with the issue in mind, or because the informal rules of the game prevented the formal rules from addressing the issue. In each case, therefore, there had to be an active attempt to change the rules of the game in order to better address the issue at hand. This involved changing institutions and behaviours, both formal and informal.

The study set three criteria that had to be met if a case was to be regarded as transformational:

- *The change had to have a clear developmental and/or public good.* While acknowledging that transformational change can take place with businesses and the private sector, this study concerned itself with changes that had brought about a wider public good. Therefore, for a case to be considered transformational within the context of this study, it had to address a clearly defined public need such as improvements in the delivery of public services, better governance or improved security.

- *The change had to be deliberate.* We dismissed cases where a change had taken place serendipitously, or as an unintended consequence of another intervention. This is not to say that transformational changes cannot occur by accident. However, in these cases, understanding how the rules of the game in these situations evolved, and therefore analysing the leadership process, would be extremely difficult.

- *The change had to be sustainable.* This criterion was problematic in some cases, as in many instances the process of change was ongoing. However, there needed to be evidence that changes in behaviours and institutions were more than superficial, and that the subsequent changes in the rules of the game would outlast a single intervention/leader. This is not to say that the rules of the game had to remain the same once an intervention had taken place or a leader had left office. Rather, there needed to be sufficient transformation to prevent a return to the rules of the game that had governed the case prior to the change.

Taking nine cases from across sub-Saharan Africa, the study tracked how the leadership processes behind each case facilitated the change. Again, there is relatively little literature examining leadership from a non-management/business perspective, and what there is tends to focus on the personality traits/characteristics of individual leaders. However, in recent years DLP has produced a body of work that examines leadership in developmental contexts, which has found that it is an intensely political process that rarely resides in just one individual. For example, Grebe and Nattrass find that leadership 'is political because leadership occurs (and is required) precisely where contestation takes place over principles, policies and resources' (Grebe & Nattrass, 2009, p. 3). Lyne de Ver notes that 'there is often considerable cross-over between formal-legal leadership, informal illicit leadership and traditional leadership… In more usual circumstances, where groups or coalitions of leaders and elites share leadership roles, what is fundamental is how coalitions and groups form, under what circumstances, and how they interact with followers and existing institutions to further or frustrate change' (Lyne de Ver, 2008, p. 28). Following this research, therefore, the study sought to examine the *processes* by means of which leaders brought about change through the exercise of developmental leadership.

> 'Developmental leadership is the process of organizing or mobilizing people and resources in pursuit of particular ends or goals, in given institutional contexts of authority, legitimacy and power (often of a hybrid kind). Achieving these ends, and overcoming the collective action problems which commonly obstruct such achievement, normally requires the building of formal or informal coalitions of interests, elites and organizations, both vertical and horizontal' (Lyne de Ver, 2009, p. 9).

A further key issue that emerged during the research was the extent to which leadership for transformational change can be equated with African leadership. While there is research that discusses African leadership as collaborative, caring and participatory (Northouse, 2010, p. 353, cited in Barnard et al., 2014, p. 23), many of the concrete examples of African leadership in the existing literature tend to focus on the predatory nature of African leadership – based on coercion rather than building legitimacy, grounded in corrupt institutions and incentives and characterised by a lack of leadership accountability (Bavister-Gould, 2011; Bratton & Masunungure, 2011; Grebe & Woermann, 2011). That is not to say there is no evidence of leadership for transformational change in Africa. However, where examples are discussed, they tend to focus on individual charismatic leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Nelson Mandela in South Africa or Julius Nyerere in Tanzania (e.g. Assensoh, 1998; Rotberg, 2012).

There is also a literature that outlines the way in which African leaders are actually very good at playing 'the game within the rules', documenting how African leaders are able to get results within the frameworks available to them (Bayart et al., 1999; Chabal & Deloz, 1999). However, this literature assumes the rules of the game are given, even if some good leaders are able to manipulate them, while our research showed that the rules of the game could be changed significantly in some circumstances. Furthermore, none of the characteristics of leadership or the dynamics of transformational change is specifically African. Indeed, where empirical cases of leadership and transformational change do exist, they tend to draw on cases from outside of Africa (e.g. Maclean, 2014; Sidel, 2014; Eslen-Ziya & Erhart, 2015).

What the cases discussed below show is that there are instances of leadership for transformational change taking place across Africa that go beyond simple narratives of individual leaders. While there is variation among these cases, and we do not assert that there is anything essentialising about either the leadership process or the nature of the transformation that can be described as 'African', there are lessons that can be learnt across the cases that may be of use to other African contexts. For example, in most of the cases it was evident that a climate for change was created as a result of weak belief in the existing rules of the game that created an appetite for change. The relative nascence of formal institutions in many parts of the continent and a tendency for populations to rely on informal rules of the game may create an environment conducive to transformational change. Conversely, volatile political contexts can mean transformational changes in Africa can have unintended consequences not anticipated by its leadership, or can easily be derailed because of changes in circumstances outside of the leadership's control. In this paper, we seek to shed light on how these processes play out, and the lessons that can be learnt from these processes.

3

Methodology

This paper draws together the findings from nine case studies of transformational change, taken from six countries in sub-Saharan Africa. As the study concerned itself with a relatively under-explored topic and sought to contribute empirical examples of change in Africa, we took a consultative and iterative approach to the project as a whole. The research took place in three phases, using a collaborative mixed methods approach, which we discuss in more detail below:

- Phase 1: Conceptual clarification and case study selection

- Phase 2: Data collection and the development of individual cases

- Phase 3: Cross-case comparison and analysis of general findings

Phase 1 of the research involved bringing together in-country research teams. Initially, four countries (Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda) were selected. These were picked because they were regarded as having made developmental gains over the past two decades, and it was thought they would contain examples of leadership for transformational change. Later, two additional countries (DRC and Ethiopia) were added, as countries where change was taking place in more difficult developmental contexts. As the research relied heavily on local knowledge and networks in order to track the change process, the study sought to work with in-country researchers. In the case of Ghana, South Africa and Uganda, we worked with single academic researchers. In Tanzania, we worked with a two-person academic research team. The researchers had previously worked either with DLP or with its wider networks and had a strong track record of producing high-quality research and academic outputs. In DRC and Ethiopia, in-country researchers worked with academics from the University of Birmingham to produce the cases. All of the studies involved significant data-gathering fieldwork.

The in-country researchers were given the freedom to pick the cases they felt worthy of study and were initially asked to produce a shortlist of four or five cases each from their respective country. One or two cases from each country would be selected collectively. The final cases were selected on the basis of the extent to which they could be seen as a positive example of leadership for transformational change. Therefore, while much of the conceptual clarification discussed above was carried out by the DLP research team and its counterparts at the UONGOZI Institute, the in-country researchers were consulted on the process at a very early stage of Phase 1, so they could pick cases appropriate for our understanding of both leadership and transformational change.

The selection of the cases in Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda was carried out through a consultative process between all the in-country researchers and the DLP and UONGOZI teams at a workshop at the University of Birmingham. This process ensured the case studies reflected a good spread of different sectors and types of leadership. Once the initial fieldwork had been carried out and findings had been generated, a further workshop was held in Dar es Salaam, when the DRC and Ethiopia cases were added with a view to expanding the variety of both the sectors and the leadership styles examined. The final list of cases covered in this study is as follows:

- *Establishment of a National Health Insurance Agency (NHIA) in Ghana.* This case examined the history of the agency. From its independence in 1957, Ghana had free healthcare, but over time steps were taken to add fees to services. The NHIA was created in 2005, and through a successful reconceptualisation of the national approach to health care, it enrolled 40% of the population into the scheme. Under the leadership of Ras Boateng and Sylvester Mensah, the NHIA was able to transform health care provision in Ghana from a system plagued by dysfunctional bureaucracy into a much more efficient system with a high-functioning administration.

- *Transformation of the human rights regime in Ghana.* The case of the Ghanaian Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) looked at the history of leadership in improving human rights in the country. The transformational change observed began after the new constitution was ratified in 1993; in the following two decades, a significant improvement to human rights in Ghana occurred. This change was facilitated by CHRAJ's long-time leader, Emile Short, who built and shaped the commission.

- *The process of political reconciliation in Zanzibar, known as Maridhiano, in Tanzania.* Though the collapse of Tanzania's Government of National Unity brings into question the lasting nature of any transformational change, this case study identified a 'discourse switch' in the consciousness and attitudes of individuals as an important change as a result of efforts by political leaders Amani Abeid Karma and Seif Shariff Hamad. The transformation in this case, therefore, related to a change in the nature of the political settlement in which the leaders of the opposing factions came together to convince their respective constituencies that a political solution in Zanzibar could be reached through cooperation and consensus, rather than through conflict.

- *Women's representation in the Tanzanian parliament.* The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) case in Tanzania was considered transformational because it facilitated the promotion of greater women's representation in the Tanzanian parliament. The TGNP used networks of feminist movements and public education to alter both the perception and presence of women in positions of power and participation in politics. The study identified 'transformative feminism' as a critical contribution to the shift in public sentiment towards women in Tanzania.

- *Improved governance and socioeconomic development in Saldanha Bay municipality of South Africa.* This was a study of leadership during critical junctures of South Africa's democratic transition. The transformational change related to improvements in the socioeconomic status of the municipality under Louis Scheepers. The study focused on the shifts in the 'rules of the local government game' that occurred through the appointment of an experienced and educated person, good governance and the cultivation of coalitions.

- *Transformation of the Office of the Public Protector and administrative justice in South Africa.* This case identified the transformational change achieved by Thuli Madonsela. During Madonsela's time, the office gained increased recognition and trust to carry out its mission. By adhering to the constitutional mandate and innovating new rules, she transformed the office to the point that it became a potential political liability. The office has faced restricted budgets and office closings as a means to limit its political impact.

- *Transformation of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) in Uganda.* This case focused on the transformation of water delivery in Uganda under the leadership of three directors, Hilary Onek, William Muhairwe and Silver Mugisha. During the tenures of each director, they facilitated transformational change in service delivery by making difficult, occasionally unpopular, decisions and guiding the corporation to succeed through encouraging teamwork and ownership among the staff. This case was considered transformational because, under these three leaders, there was a marked improvement in the development of water infrastructure, as well as better communication between the NWSC and the general public on the nature of water delivery and billing.

- *Community policing in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia.* This case examined the impact of hybrid leadership approaches in ushering in police reform. A transformational change observed was the dramatic shift in the relationship between the police and the community. Prior regimes had instilled fear through policing, but, utilising a hybrid leadership approach, the state police were able to integrate non-state leaders and the community into a sense of ownership of their own police services.

- *The rise of the youth-led non-violent activist group LUCHA in DRC.* The LUCHA case focused on a small youth-led movement that had originated in Goma, DRC. The transformational change in the study related to the nature of political participation and civic empowerment in DRC. The horizontal leadership and non-violent mission structure of LUCHA enabled collaboration and inclusiveness previously not present in DRC political movements.

In each of the cases, a transformational change in the rules of the game had taken place, a clear leadership process had facilitated this change and, through the process of change, a clear developmental good had emerged.

The in-country researchers were then tasked with identifying the leaders who had facilitated the change and tracking the leadership process to examine how change had happened. The case studies focused on four key elements:

- The change (i.e. how the rules of the game were altered)

- The effects of the change (i.e. the public good element, the winners and the losers, etc.)

- The role of leadership (i.e. the leaders, the coalitions of change they created, their followers and the interactions, incentives and ideas that linked them to the change)

- The enablers and disablers (i.e. the other factors that facilitated or frustrated the leadership process)

The case studies used a combination of desk-based documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with key informants to track the leadership process. Where possible, leaders were identified and interviewed, as were their wider networks of change. In some cases, it was acknowledged that, while a transformational change may have taken place, this might have produced unintended consequences that might have undermined the developmental good that it initially set out to achieve. These hindering processes were also explored and are discussed later in Section 5 on disablers of change.[1]

This overview paper draws together the different case studies and presents some commonalities across the cases that may be useful for the study of leadership for transformational change in Africa. The detailed case studies will then provide us with the empirical evidence to answer the six wider research questions discussed above. In order to ensure the cases could be compared and contrasted, the researchers were asked to structure their cases studies along the lines of five guiding questions, which enabled them to track both the leadership and the change process in each case:

- Where is transformational change taking place and how does it manifest?

- How do leaders, elites and coalitions for change emerge? How can/do they disrupt existing leaders?

- How do leaders create visions for change, and how do they convince followers of this vision?

- What external factors enable or disable change?

- What are the consequences of transformational change?

The paper focuses on common themes that emerged in several of the cases, but also highlights some specific illustrative cases. It is hoped that these cases and findings will form the basis of further studies of transformational change in Africa and the creation of a stronger body of empirical evidence.

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[1]   We acknowledge the difficulties of researching in dynamic political contexts: in some cases, rapid changes in the political environment affected the research both directly and indirectly. For example, in Zanzibar, civil unrest around the election frustrated the *Maridhiano* process while the research was taking place. This not only altered the nature of the transformation the research team believed had initially taken place, but also made it very difficult for the team to conduct interviews with those leaders involved in the process. In Ethiopia, the government's decision to suspend the internet made collaboration between the Ethiopian research team and their colleagues at the University of Birmingham increasingly difficult, and led to delays in data collection. Similarly in DRC, increased governmental repression towards LUCHA activities frustrated the research process. While attempts were made to mitigate these problems, there were gaps in the research. The findings are therefore partial in some ways and should be seen as initial investigations pointing to further potential research areas.

4

Enablers of leadership for transformational change

This section discusses the enablers of leadership for transformational change that emerged across the different cases. Broadly speaking, these factors fall into two overarching categories:

- Factors intrinsic to the leadership process itself

- External factors that may have helped the leadership process but were not created by the leaders

It is acknowledged that in some cases the division between these two factors is not so clear-cut. This is particularly the case for one of the main enablers of leadership for transformational change – namely, an environment conducive to change. Across all the cases, it was clear from the outset that the status quo was failing to meet the developmental needs of the population. In Ghana, the existing system of financing health care was seen as excessively burdensome on citizens, and this was having a negative impact on health sector outcomes (World Bank, 2007). Similarly in DRC, the government had neglected the east of the country for decades, leading to high levels of insecurity and under-development in the province of North Kivu (NHIA, 2013; Raeymaekers, 2013).

In both these cases, therefore, there was an environment conducive to change, as citizens understood that the current rules of the game were not benefiting them (Leftwich & Hogg, 2007, p. 12). However, the manner in which the leadership process interacted with this environment differed: in one the environment can be seen as an external factor that enabled the leadership, and in the other the environment was itself part of the leadership process. Ethiopia, for example, has been subject to competing centralisation and decentralisation forces, and the environment allowing change to happen was a direct result of an end to that historical pendulum effect and the commitment to a more fluid approach to finding a negotiated position, rather than a conflicting one, between the two, which then determined the external environment within which change could actually evolve (Baker, 2013).

The Ghanaian system of health care financing that existed prior to implementation of the National Health Insurance Scheme was prohibitively expensive, meaning people simply did not seek out health care (Kusi et al., 2015). This resulted in poor health outcomes such as high maternal mortality rates (World Bank, 2007). As such, prior to creation of the NHIA, there was public demand for changes in the health care system. While the NHIA showed leadership in responding to this change, and a vision in creating new rules of the game around the provision of health care, an appetite for change and an environment conducive to change existed prior to the NHIA leadership process. As such, this environment was an external factor that facilitated the leadership for transformational change but was not directly intrinsic to the leadership process itself.

In contrast, while it was known in the DRC case that the government in Kinshasa had neglected the east of the country, citizens had grown accustomed to government inaction and therefore did not demand much from the state or see the need to demand change. However, the DRC case of transformational change concerned a youth-led movement called LUCHA that believed it was necessary for citizens to hold the Congolese government to account. Intrinsic to the leadership process, therefore, was the cognitive liberation (McAdam, 1988) of Congolese citizens to demand change. As such, in this case, creating an environment conducive to change was explicitly part of LUCHA's leadership process. The two contrasting cases therefore show that, in some cases, an environment conducive to change may predate or be external to the leadership process. In other cases, leadership for transformational change may lie in creating an environment conducive to change.

Regardless of whether or not an environment conducive change was external or intrinsic to leadership for transformational change, across all the cases studied in this project it was evident that capitalising on appetites for change and recognising 'ripe moments' was an intrinsic enabler of leadership. While leadership usually emerged when there was a clear need for a change in the rules of the game, and the opportunity to change those rules, leaders had to be careful when picking their moments of action, and convince potential followers that changing the rules of the game according to the leader's vision was in the interests of the followers.

For example, one of the cases from Tanzania concerned the TGNP (Mtandao) and its role in promoting female representation in the Tanzanian parliament. The informal rules of the game that existed as a result of the traditionally patriarchal nature of Tanzanian society meant the issue of women's participation in the parliament had received little attention among the country's political elite. However, as Tanzania sought greater cooperation with regional and international organisations such as the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations, it signed up to a number of protocols on female empowerment. The TGNP capitalised on this as an opportunity to push for wider representation of women in parliament. Understanding when the moment is right to push for change, and therefore recognising when leadership on a particular issue is needed, is an important enabler of leadership for transformational change.

While the leadership process needs to begin with recognition that the time is right for change, for leaders to actually emerge in this process they need to have access to power. Sometimes, the leaders in our cases were members of existing elites who understood they could consolidate or grow their power by leading a change, but in some cases they had emerged from relatively marginalised groups. In both cases, however, it was important that those who sought leadership positions had an ability to establish credibility and legitimacy to lead a process. In some cases, leaders had been appointed by even higher-level leaders or groups.

In South Africa, Public Protector Thuli Madonsela was elected unanimously to the position by the African National Congress (ANC). However, despite this top-down process of appointment, these leaders needed to build bottom-up legitimacy and show citizens they were working for the public good in order to ensure grassroots support for their visions of change. Thus, despite initially having the unanimous backing of the ANC, Madonsela realised that, if she was going to improve public trust in the Office of the Public Protector, she would need to be seen as fighting government abuse of state power (PMG, 2014). As a result, she took on several high-profile cases against the ANC. This bought her considerable legitimacy as a protector with integrity, and showed the public she was more than simply a puppet of the ANC.

This dilemma was also clear in the formal policing structures of Ethiopia, where an institution that has been known for its brutality in dealing with the local population embraced community policing both as a means of improving security but also as a way of working with the public to improve police–civilian relations – something that has not really worked in many parts of Ethiopia, let alone more broadly in Africa (Abrahams, 1998, p. 52).

While the educational/experience of certain leaders was significant in helping establish certain leaders as credible, in some cases appointed leaders were met with initial scepticism but were able to show levels of political savvy that eventually led to their acceptance as leaders. For example, in the case of Uganda's NWSC, all three of the leaders covered had been appointed with the backing and support of President Museveni. Particularly in the case of the NWSC's longest-serving president, William Muhairwe, those working in the corporation were initially resistant to his programme of change, and felt he had little credibility to lead them as he did not have a background in water management. However, Muhairwe was able to capitalise on his expertise in marketing and communication in order to improve communication between different branch managers and between the NWSC and the public. Once those working under him saw improvements, he gained credibility as a leader.

It was evident in the cases that, while those who had a proven track record and/or qualification in a particular field were more easily accepted as credible leaders, in order to maintain credibility they needed to be politically savvy. For example, in the case of Ghana's NHIA, while Director of Administration Daniel Otoo had credibility based on his technical experience in insurance, his leadership was subordinate to that of Chief Executive Sylvester Mensah, who had less technical expertise. However, Mensah was widely respected as a leader because he was able to negotiate Ghana's complex political environment and use his political skills to ensure formal changes in the rules of the game, which went beyond the efficiency improvements made by Otoo. The contrast between the two leaders shows that, while technical proficiency may be useful in gaining immediate credibility, alone it is insufficient to bring about transformational change. Technical expertise can ensure good management but political savvy is necessary for more meaningful leadership.

Certainly, most of the cases showed that political savvy was necessary both for the credibility of individual leaders but also for the leadership process itself. Indeed, while in most cases there was an individual or small group leading the charge, in order for a transformational change to take place the leadership process required buy-in from a wider coalition of change agents. Thus, another enabler that emerged across the cases was the ability to bring together a coalition of actors with the power to effect change.

In the case of the transformation of Saldanha Bay municipality in South Africa, for example, Municipal Manager Louis Scheepers was able to transform the socioeconomic status of the municipality by reaching out across party lines and working with academic institutions and businesses. Similarly in Zanzibar, the two leaders of the opposing parties that had decided to share power in the Government of National Unity did so after cross-party and public support was given to end conflict and negotiate a power-sharing arrangement (Matheson, 2012). In two of the cases – that of the TGNP in Tanzania and that of LUCHA in DRC – the leaders themselves were a coalition of different actors, who in turn were able to draw on their wider networks to effect change. While it is unclear exactly how such collective leadership enables transformational change, the studies found this would be an interesting area for further study.

One possible hypothesis emerging from the LUCHA case was that leadership for transformational change lay not in the qualities of the individuals leading the change but rather in the ideas behind the change. While there is insufficient evidence among the other cases to support this finding, the effective communication of vision and ideas did emerge in several cases as an enabler of change. In particular, leadership for transformational change required an ability to convince followers and coalitions of change that change was in their interest. For example, in Ghana, creation of the CHRAJ came about because political elites realised that, if they wanted to present themselves as proponents of a functioning multi-party democracy (as opposed to the military regime that they had replaced), it was important to have a constitution that promulgated human rights. In DRC, LUCHA managed to convince the young urban middle class that they needed to fight for their rights and demand accountability from the government, or the state would continue to extract from and prey upon them. This shift away from individual leaders per se towards legitimacy among a group was also seen in the Ethiopian example, where local community leaders and traditional authorities were seen to have legitimacy in dealing with the central institutions of the police.

Across all the cases it was evident that change did not happen overnight, and that the leadership process was extremely arduous. The most effective leadership processes were those that made small changes and built on those successes to effect wider change. For example, one of the early changes Thuli Madonsela made to the Office of the Public Protector was the reorganisation of the office and an increase in the workforce to include 100 new trainees (PMG, 2014). Alone, these changes would not constitute a change in the rules of the game, but rather an improvement in the management of the existing rules (i.e. it was already accepted that the Office of the Public Protector needed to be run efficiently with more staff, and Madonsela simply ensured these rules were enacted). However, Madonsela used this improvement in organisational culture to give the Office of the Public Protector a higher public profile, and opened local offices outside of the major cities. This gave the public more direct access, and accordingly improved public trust, which in turn changed behaviours and attitudes towards the role of the public protector as more than merely a puppet of the ANC (i.e. changes in the rules of the game). With increased public awareness and trust, Madonsela was given the authority and resources to increase her investigations, and this in turn gave her the legitimacy to investigate government corruption, which had a direct effect on curbing state abuse of power (Transparency International, 2014). Thus, she was able to build on the successes of small changes to achieve a larger vision of change in the rules of the game.

It was also clear across a number of our cases that leadership itself was not sufficient for transformational change and that the external factors affecting the nature of the change also varied. In some cases, there was a serendipitous environment conducive to change in existence prior to the establishment of a leadership process, allowing leaders to emerge. Linked to this, change was also more likely in situations where there was already a wide degree of consensus among elites about how change should take place. Additionally, the leadership process was enabled by environments where those who were likely to lose as a result of change could not act as spoilers. In the Ugandan NWSC case, for example, some employees were resistant to early changes in the organisational culture but they were easy to dismiss and had little leverage to stand in the way of change. However, this power disparity points to a potentially important finding in the research: it is possible that positive transformational change may emerge as a result of authoritarian or repressive leadership styles. This issue is underexplored in the wider literature on leadership, and there is insufficient evidence beyond the Ugandan case in our own study to make concrete assertions. However, it is an area that warrants further exploration.

To a degree, all the leadership stories showed leaders being savvy and resourceful. However, it was evident across the cases that the availability of resources played a role in enabling the leadership process. Support from national elites with the ability to allocate budgets in Ghana, South Africa and Uganda allowed all the leaders in those cases to make the small changes they needed to begin the process of wider change. Furthermore, codified legal frameworks promoting developmental/public goods allowed the leadership in several of the cases to protect themselves against powerful resistors of change. Despite receiving some backlash against her work from the ANC, Madonsela was able to protect herself by demonstrating she was acting in accordance with South Africa's laws. Similarly in DRC, LUCHA argued that citizens needed to demand the rights and freedoms accorded to them under the Congolese constitution. While all the cases demonstrated at least some of the enablers of transformational change discussed above, the nature and extent of the transformations varied greatly. This was because, while enablers were present, each case was also plagued by a number of disablers. The following section discusses these.

5

Disablers of leadership for transformational change

While the rules of the game in all of the cases were altered, the extent of transformation and the sustainability of the changes varied from case to case. In some cases, the change was severely limited as a result of shifts in the political context. For example, in the Zanzibar case, the Government of National Unity collapsed after the 2015 elections. In other cases, the derailment was less dramatic. While LUCHA continues to engage in activities designed to hold the government to account, as the movement has grown divisions within LUCHA have somewhat hampered their progress. Nonetheless, these cases can still be regarded as changes that were in some way transformational, because a change in the rules of the game did actually take place. While the positive developmental good that emerged as a result of the change may not have been as profound or as far-reaching as was initially hoped, the rules of the game did not revert back to the old rules that existed prior to the change. In these cases, it is useful to think of 'pockets' of change in which significant and lasting changes have been made to some aspects of the rules of the game, even if the full transformational potential of the change has not been achieved.

The studies pointed to a number of factors in both the leadership processes themselves and the external environment, which prevented some of the changes from reaching their full potential. Again, as with the enablers, some of these disablers could be seen as both intrinsic and external. For example, a number of cases showed that a *drastic change in the political environment* was a key disabler of leadership for transformational change. As discussed above, the 2015 Tanzanian elections, for example, had a profound effect on derailing the political settlement in Zanzibar. While this could be read as a factor outside of the Zanzibari leadership's control, another reading could be that the leaders of the Government of National Unity failed to adapt and react appropriately to this external shock (Bakari, 2011). By contrast, when the Congolese authorities used violence and repression to beat and arrest LUCHA activists, they used this external shock to highlight government authoritarianism and launched high-profile campaigns to release the LUCHA activists. Public indignation at the repression of peaceful protest then encouraged more people to join the cause.

In many of the cases, evidence of the disablers of leadership for transformational change intrinsic to the leadership process came from an examination of the *status quo* prior to the change in question taking place. Many of the intrinsic disablers of leadership in the cases could simply be characterised as an absence of the intrinsic enablers. In other words, leadership failed when the leaders were not able to show they had the credibility to lead or build legitimacy among their constituents; the leaders were not able to build coalitions for change, or convince change agents of their vision; they missed potential opportunities for change and ripe moments; and they were unable to effectively communicate their visions of change or convince potential followers that change was in their interests. In some cases, however, there was evidence that, while intrinsic enablers may initially have been present, *changes in the leadership process may have become disablers of full transformation.* For example, in the case of the Ugandan NWSC, President Hilary Onek began with a radical agenda for change and managed to convince followers of his vision. However, after a while he seemed to lose interest in the change project. As a result, a true transformation in the rules of the game did not take place until his successor, William Muhairwe, took over control of the NWSC.

At the same time, in the example of Ethiopia, a class of leaders managed to change itself from an overwhelmingly oppositional movement designed to resist policing changes from the centre, into a legitimate movement that made those changes possible but also negotiated what changes could and should be implemented. In this way, the leadership group became an intermediary between the government police and the community and was able to develop a form of transformational change that had its own legitimacy and enjoyed support from both sides.

One of the key external disablers of transformational change that emerged from the cases was that the *changes in the rules of the game within the issue at hand failed to translate into wider developmental change.* For example, while Thuli Madonsela was able to release the Nkandla report outlining improper funds received by President Jacob Zuma, the South Africa parliament refused to hold Zuma to account for his actions. In DRC, although LUCHA successfully prevented President Kabila from altering the constitution to allow him to stand for a third term, Kabila nonetheless remains in power through a process of *glissement* – in which he has been able to serve a *de facto* third term by simply not holding the elections that were scheduled for 2016.

It is possible that, when the developmental good expected as a result of the transformational change does not emerge, this may have a feedback effect in terms of undermining the leadership process itself. For example, once Madonsela began investigating Zuma and the ANC, she found her resources were cut and not renewed, as President Zuma was less inclined to allocate her resources to investigate him and his inner circle. Clearly, a *lack of resources* is itself a disabler, but the effect on the leadership process was even greater because, with Madonsela having expanded the reach of the Office of the Public Protector, the public had come to expect her and her team to undertake an untenable number of cases with the reduced resources that were now available to her.

The nature of the change can also be localised geographically. The Ethiopian case showed that this type of change could be achieved, and achieved by communities as well as leaders, but community policing remains more successful in Dire Dawa than in other parts of Ethiopia. This, then, points to a need for further work on how to scale up these 'islands of success' where the combination of leadership and context has produced the conditions for transformational change.

Another external factor that can disable leadership for transformational change relates to the issue being transformed becoming unpopular or of low priority to political elites or the wider population. In the case of the TGNP, it was clear that the issue of women's representation in parliament was of significance to Tanzanian political parties around the times of elections, and during these times the TGNP leadership was able to capitalise on the appetite for change (Tripp et al., 1992; Mkilanya, 2011; Coulter et al., 2014). However, *a lack of genuine buy-in to the importance of the issue* meant that, when they could not instrumentalise it as a tool for electoral advantage, political elites tended to lose interest in the issue and therefore in changing the rules of the game.

The DRC case showed that factors that may have enabled transformational change at the beginning of the process might later become disablers of wider change. As such, disablers can emerge from the *unintended consequences of early gains.* For example, one of the initial strengths of LUCHA was that, by adopting a horizontal leadership style, it was able to bring together a broad church of actors to fight together for positive developmental change. However, as the movement has grown, differences in interests and visions have led to internal divisions. As a result, the momentum of the group in driving forward change has been somewhat undermined by a lack of coherent vision about how to proceed. In this way, we can see that a *loss of direction or stagnation of vision* can become a disabler to effective leadership.

6

Conclusion

This paper has drawn together findings from case studies exploring the enablers and disablers of leadership for transformational change in Africa. Based on these cases, and in answer to our overarching question, 'What are the enablers and disablers of leadership for transformational change in Africa?', we offer some tentative key findings:

- Across Africa, there have been instances of widespread dissatisfaction with the existing rules of the game, creating opportunities for transformational change.

- In these instances, a type of leadership has emerged. This 'leadership for transformational change' differs from traditional management or individualistic leadership in that it seeks to fundamentally alter the rules of the game and set out a vision for making that change happen.

- *Such leadership is an intensely political process and goes well beyond technical or managerial competence. It involves mobilising people and resources to work together for a common developmental good.* As the case of Ghana's NHIA shows, for example, technical or managerial expertise can take change only so far; true transformation requires leadership to exercise political savvy.

- *Understanding leadership therefore requires examination of the interests and incentives of the actors driving the change, the coalitions they build to facilitate the change and the followers who support the change.* As the case of Zanzibar shows, identifying change agents, building coalitions and getting their support is a long and arduous process that requires flexibility, compromise and strong communication to constituents.

- Effective leadership for transformational change is enabled by intrinsic and external factors that include:

  - the existence and/or creation of an environment conducive to change;

  - a group of actors who recognise that the time is right for change and have the capability to seize 'ripe' moments;

  - leaders who can establish credibility as drivers of change, communicate a vision of change and enjoy legitimacy among followers and external actors;

  - the creation of coalitions of change agents, who have been convinced that the leadership's vision of change is in their interests and who can work together to make change happen; and

  - a leadership process that builds on small initial gains to effect wider change.

- The absence of enabling factors can present serious barriers to leadership, but there are additional factors that may disable transformational change entirely. These include:

  - a drastic change in the political system that can derail the leadership process;

  - the emergence of a powerful group of spoilers acting against the change;

  - fragmentation of the leadership process and loss of direction in achieving the change;

  - lack of genuine buy-in to the need for change, and the issue becoming of low importance for those who may have seen change as instrumental; and

  - unintended consequences emerging from the change process.

- *Some factors in the leadership process can at particular times be enablers of leadership and at other times become disablers.* In the case of LUCHA in DRC, the factors that had enabled the leadership to build up a mass movement later became obstacles that the leadership had to overcome to drive the movement forward. At the same time, as the case of Ethiopia shows, some of the leaders themselves can act in opposition to change if it is seen as a legitimate activity.

- *In some of the cases, change took place as a result of authoritarian leadership styles, while consultative or collaborative leadership processes prevented more widespread change.* For example, in the case of the Ugandan NWSC, the leadership often drove forward change by simply dismissing actors who may have resisted change before they became spoilers. This was possible because the resisters were too weak to challenge the leadership.

- *The cases rarely resulted in complete transformation, but rather pockets of transformational change.* In the case of Saldanha Bay, for example, the change was confined to socioeconomic growth within the municipality in relation to the Special Economic Zone.

The nine cases covered are insufficient in number to allow robust conclusions about African leadership, and the issues encountered are not confined to the continent. However, these cases do show that interesting and important stories of positive leadership and transformational change are taking place across Africa.

The research points to the need to look beyond the image of Africa as simply a continent of cautionary tales: positive transformational change is taking place in the political sphere and the public sector, not just the private sector. It is hoped that this paper will serve as starting point for further research into how positive change happens in Africa, and the leadership processes behind such changes.

The research also indocates that change can be facilitated and led through different leadership styles. In some ways, this subverts some of the traditional leadership literature by showing that there is no linear relationship between leadership style and the type of change that results. Rather, we show that different leadership styles can lead to significant changes in the rules of the game in specific contexts.

While it is also something of a truism that context matters, the cases also show that particular leaders were able to transcend the confines of their context. They either changed the rules of the game to allow change to happen or became very good at playing the game to enable change within the confines of the rules.

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